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Close Watch On CIA Wanted

Ever since the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion, there have been pressures by some congressmen for creation of a watchdog committee to keep an eye on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Last to push for such surveillance is Senator McCarthy, the Minnesota Democrat.

Congress lacks authority to check the CIA but can look into activities of other governmental agencies. This lack of a look-in on the CIA, McCarthy says, has made it impossible to "determine the validity of criticisms or to prevent distortions or to dispel rumors."

Certainly the CIA could present a better face to the country if the McCarthy objective of determining "the validity of criticisms" were realized. The secret agency has been suspected for its involvement in the Bay of Pigs fiasco as well as in dubious activities in the Dominican Republic and Viet Nam.

Senator Young, Ohio Democrat, reminded recently that the CIA was set up to collect and evaluate intelligence, but instead it has "taken on the character of an invisible government." It stands accused of trying to make foreign policy.

It can be argued that the CIA is by its very nature a highly secret agency, hence it should be immune from official surveillance. But the Atomic Energy Commission is also engaged in secret work, yet a congressional committee keeps an eye on it without endangering national security. A similar effect is foreseeable for the CIA under watchful eyes.